

S E R M O N,

OCCASIONED BY THE

D E A T H

O F

Mifs ELIZABETH CHRISTIAN,

DAUGHTER OF THE

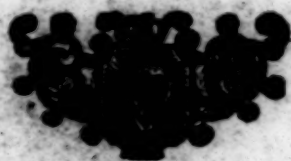
Rev. Mr. WILLIAM CHRISTIAN,

Late of SHEEPSHEAD, in LEICESTERSHIRE,

Who departed this Life SEPTEMBER 23, 1765:

PREACHED SEPTEMBER XXIX.

By J O H N M A R T I N.



C O V E N T R Y;

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J. Ireland, Leicester; and J. Poole, in Hinckley.

M,DCC,LXV.

1765

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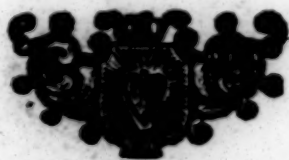
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2 E R M O N

T H E

P R E F A C E.

*T*HE substance of the following Discourse, as the title assures you, was occasioned by the Death of Miss ELIZABETH CHRISTIAN; and its being made public, is at the request of her mother, and others, who heard it. As it was preached without notes, possibly some circumstances may be forgot, and some inserted, that was not delivered: Yet I am persuaded, as I committed my thoughts that evening to writing, there is nothing material omitted; and I cannot help thinking, but those, who enjoy a retentive memory, that heard it, will find it is much the same. That they may the better judge, I have not altered the form of delivery, for the sake of being more methodical or orderly; but have, as near as I could, wrote it in the form I then made use of; which, being affected with the Providence, was to insist on those things I was favoured with the remembrance of, and that without any particular study to a regular disposal, which I wish the matter may atone for, and make amends. I

am not against a proper concern for a practice of this kind; yet God forbid, that, on any occasion, I should attempt to stifle what may be useful and precious, merely because its not consistent with the formal track of those who seem more industrious to preach themselves than Christ crucified.

Some, perhaps, seeing it is a Funeral, expected I should have devoted five or six pages in giving an account of the Deceased; but remembering that I preached to the living, and under an hope of being useful, I thought it more adviseable only to mention her as the words of my text led me to consider her case: And I am persuaded, what I have said of this kind, is consistent with truth. May the Lord, who inhabits the praises of Israel, pardon every imperfection, and let not any of the important truths insisted on suffer by the manner in which they appear; but, on the contrary, make them of use and comfort to many; especially may it lead believers to observe, that to die is gain, and that precious in the sight of the Lord is the Death of his Saints.

The HYMN *before the* SERMON.

I.

LET hopeleſs mortals mourn * and cry
When Death arreſts a friend;
Such grief foretels they dread to die,
And fear their latter end.

II.

But we, who truſt in Jeſus, can't
To ſuch exceſſes grieve,
Since 'tis not them, but we that want,
Want what they now receive.

III.

Freed from its clay, the ſoul, with ſpeed,
Flew to the promis'd reſt;
There it adores, and lives, and reigns,
And triumphs with the bleſt.

IV.

Cou'd we, by faith, mount up and fly,
And view their glory here,
Shou'd we not want, yea---wiſh to die,
That we might join 'em there?

* That is, Immoderately, or to exceſs.

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The HYMN *before the* SERMON.

I.

LET hopeless mortals mourn * and cry
When Death arrests a friend;
Such grief foretels they dread to die,
And fear their latter end.

II.

But we, who trust in Jesus, can't
To such excesses grieve,
Since 'tis not them, but we that want,
Want what they now receive.

III.

Freed from its clay, the soul, with speed,
Flew to the promis'd rest;
There it adores, and lives, and reigns,
And triumphs with the blest.

IV.

Cou'd we, by faith, mount up and fly,
And view their glory here,
Shou'd we not want, yea---wish to die,
That we might join 'em there?

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NOTWITHSTANDING it is expected, and earnestly desired, that I should, at this time, preach from something agreeable to the breach which God has lately made amongst us by Death; yet neither the deceased, or any of the surviving relatives, have made choice of any word for that purpose: Being therefore left at my liberty, and seeking for direction about it, I find myself most inclined, relying on God for assistance, to open and explain that portion of Scripture you may find in Psalm cxvi. vers. 15. which I sincerely wish may be of as much use to them who hear me, as I am persuaded it has reference and consistency with the Death of our Friend. The words read thus:—

*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the Death
of his Saints.*

WHEN I behold the audience before me, and consider what an increase there generally is on these occasions, I cannot help remarking the weakness of many: What expectations some have formed, or what strange conclusions they have drawn, I cannot tell. Do you think, my friends, that I shall preach this day differently from the rest? or that it is sufficient if you attend only on these occasions? Must next Lord's-day be neglected, if there is no funeral? or shall you have no need to attend? God forbid I should say any thing to discourage your attendance, at this or any other time. I have no such design; and I am satisfied,

hed, that none but the ignorant or prejudiced can think so: All I intend by such an introduction, is, to inform you of the necessity of a constant attendance, at all seasonable times, on a preached-gospel, and not to think it sufficient to appear only on these occasions.

In all things, what a Sovereign is God! *How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* He kills, and he makes alive; he wounds, and he heals; neither is there any that can deliver out of his hand^b. Death, the most formidable of all evils, is intirely at his command: Commissioned by him, it arrests, and lays us under its power, when and where he pleases: 'Tis neither royalty nor riches, that can ward or keep off the blow; 'tis neither age or youth, that can escape. In vain do we pursue, at times like these, every office of kindness, and act the part of a tender and compassionate friend. Or, on the contrary, if he says, Forbear,—the disease, that, like *Saul*, has slain its thousands, cannot kill. A sparrow falls not without his knowledge^c and permission. Well, it is our duty, amidst these displays of a sovereign power, to be still, and know the Lord has done it^d, who does all things well^e, and who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works^f. And who can but admire the love and condescension of the Lord, to leave us the Word of his Truth; to which we do well to take heed, and carefully peruse, when such displays of his sovereignty and power are before us. How ought we to prize and esteem this

^a Rom. xi. 33.

^b Deut. xxxii. 39.

^c Matt. x. 29.

^d Psal.

xlvi. 10.

^e Mark vii. 37.

^f Psal. cxlv. 17.

volume of our Father's Grace, which is as a light in a dark place, and reconciles to us the mysteries of Providence! Would not the death of our relations and friends be a double loss, was it not for this revealed will? I doubt not, but the tender *Parent*, and other afflicted Relatives, before me, find the pleas of nature many and strong. But consider, my friends, how much greater must have been your sorrow, if you had no intimation of the nature of her change. Supposing God had thought fit to make that all uncertainty to us while here—supposing we were intirely in the dark about it—What strange conjectures, what false ideas would have followed! What distrusting fears, and perplexing thoughts, must have ensued! But, glory be to his name! he leaves you in no such anxiety; but, from various passages of his good word, moderates your sorrow, speaks comfortably, to your ease, and very plainly, concerning the Death of his Saints: Assuring you, that *blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord^g*; and that those, which *sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him^h*. I observe, upon these, as well as upon other occasions, we seldom act the becoming part; either we are unaffected, or not properly so. Certain I am, that the present providence, and all of the like kind, in one sense, calls for mourning; though, in another, there is room for rejoicing: *The righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heartⁱ*; i. e. properly, or in the manner they ought. At the removal of such, the Church of Christ sustains a loss; and we should be affected with it, and sensible

^g Rev. xiv. 13. ^h 1 Thes. iv. 14. ⁱ Isa. lvii. 1.

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of it. The cause of truth is low; therefore these things should put us upon praying to the Lord, to raise up others in their stead, that Zion may flourish, and her branches be repaired. But, as I have hinted, the point, considered in another light, admits of joy, and calls for thankfulness. Perhaps this will appear evident and plain, by a close application to the words of my text.

They were, it seems, wrote by *David*, and that just after the Lord had wrought out a remarkable deliverance for him; which, that he might not forget, pens this Psalm. He begins by telling us, that he loves the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of his supplications. And indeed it should both raise our admiration, and increase our love, to think that God has an ear for our complaints. On account of God's appearance for him, he declares he will call upon him as long as he lives; and that, as assisted, in every future distress, he will make use of the same means for help and comfort; for where the Lord delivers, he gives an heart to desire. In some of the following verses we are told of his impatience and misconduct under afflictions, and of God's goodness toward him, which fills him with gratitude and wonder; so that while he contemplates the divine favour, he is at a loss to express his sense of it: *What shall I render* (says he) *unto the Lord, for all his benefits toward me?* he answers thus: *I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord;* and then adds, *I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all his people.* It is very natural for man in affliction
to

to vow and promise; and, I am inclined to believe, this shews our attachment to works, as though God could not but chuse to help, when we propose to make a sort of satisfaction. I do not mention this because I think every vow sinful, but I fear most come from a base bottom; and that many are, like the Children of *Israel*, made in our own strength, and so never performed. But if any thing has passed between the Lord and our souls, may *David* be our pattern, who says, I will pay them; I have not, Lord, forgot my voluntary promise, in the day of my distress, nor will I desist from the performance; but, as helped, I will pay my vows unto the Lord; and that not presently, but now; now, while a sense of thy goodness is before me; and that not in private, as though I was ashamed, but it shall be in the presence of all thy people. After this, are the words I first read, which seem to be a kind of a rest or pause, in which *David* looks upon Death in a different light then what perhaps he had done a little before; and, with regard to God, concludes, *That precious in his sight is the Death of his Saints.*—That I may open this mystery (for so it doubtless is to many), with the greatest plainness I can, and, at the same time, shew what reference it has to the Death of our Friend, I shall discourse more particularly from the words in the following manner:

I. I shall observe that God has among the children of men those whom he calls his Saints.

II. Shall shew you why they must die.

B 2

III. Consider

III. Consider for what reasons the death of his Saints are said to be precious in his sight.

And from the whole, as I proceed, make such observations as may be naturally drawn from the several heads I have proposed.

May the Lord enable you to attend with seriousness, and for profit, and me to speak to the purpose; and with that becoming gravity and concern that the subjects require. I was,

I. To observe, That God has among the children of men, those whom he calls his Saints.

That God has those whom he calls so, is generally allowed by all, that pay any regard to his word: But some, I find, that read it rather for amusement than advantage, think this is a name which only belongs to Angels, or some illustrious Saints of old. Angels are out of the question by this verse, since they are not subject to Death. And that the name more properly belongs to St. *Paul*, St. *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, or *John*, than any whom God calls by his grace, is a mistake, and owing to a misunderstanding of the scriptures. Some, I know, think it little less than blasphemy to have the name continued; but why? What I pray you was the Apostle *Paul*, or any of them by nature more than we? Was they not children of wrath even as others? Was not he, before conversion, in ignorance, in unbelief, a blasphemer, a persecutor, an injurious person? And does he not declare that all the difference was made by grace? saying, *By the grace of God I am what I am*^m.

1 1 Tim. i. 13. m 1 Cor. xv. 10.

And

And if we carefully view the case of any other, it will be found the same; and appear that none are born Saints, but made so; or, as the Apostle has it, *called to be Saints*ⁿ: So that it is a name common to the children of God in all ages, and may by no means be laid aside or forgot; for though it is not to be expected there now is men of that figure and note as were the Apostles, yet there is Saints, and faithful in Christ Jesus. I would farther enlarge upon this point, by considering why this name is given, and continued to the children of men. And here let me observe, it may be, First, because all such are ordained, separated, and set apart, to taste of grace here, and glory hereafter. 'Tis not more true what the Lord says of *Jeremiah*, than it has reference to all his people, concerning whom he says, *Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations*^o. Now I apprehend that sanctification here principally intends his being ordained, and set apart for the great work of a prophet. And thus all Saints, as well as *Jeremiah*, are set apart, though not for prophets, yet for the ends of God's glory, and that before they came out from the womb, or were formed in the belly. This I think all must allow, that allow a God; for what is God? Is he not infinite, eternal? Does he not declare the end from the beginning? Can we think he contrives and plots like man? builds and destroys, approves and disapproves of the same? This *thing*, let mortals call it what they will, is not God: For known

ⁿ Rom. i. 7. ^o Jer. i. 5.

unto him are all things from the beginning^p; and with him there is not the shadow of a change. He is God, and changeth not^q. His works of creation stand without alteration, and his purposes of grace and mercy, are more fixed and firm than the laws of the *Medes* and *Persians*.

Secondly, They may be called Saints, because of that work of sanctification which all such pass under. For where the Lord imputes his righteousness, he imparts his grace; whom he predestinates, them he also calls^r: Therefore even infants cannot be excepted. They are born in sin, and shapen in iniquity^s, which must not only be atoned for, but they regenerated, before they can go to glory; for no unclean thing can enter there. I say nothing concerning the salvation of such, nor do I know whether all, not having committed actual transgression, do not partake of it; but this I know, it must be through the Lord Jesus, and they pass under the change I here contend for. And though there is no visible display of this to us, yet who dare say it is not so, since the Lord makes no exception, but tells us, all the justified and glorified are called^t? And why should it be thought strange? Is any thing too hard for God? Nay, to speak after the manner of men, it must be easiest; for the adult are not only passive, but found fighters against God. It must therefore follow, that all so set apart experience this change; and that if any man be manifestatively in Christ, he is a new creature^u; and that the King's Daughter has not only a cloathing of wrought Gold, but is all-glorious

p Acts xv. 18. q Mal. iii. 6. r Rom. viii. 30. s Ps. li. 5.
t Rom. viii. 30. u 2 Cor. v. 17.

within^w. The necessity of this appears, by considering that heaven cannot be enjoyed without it; for *without holiness no man can see the Lord*^x. There must be a suitableness between the person and the thing enjoyed; but what agreement between light and darkness, or Christ and Belial? Have we not seen, when the young and vain have been constrained to attend, and be with their parents, or friends, at public worship, how awkwardly and irreverently they have behaved; how restless and uneasy they have seemed? so that their very countenances have betrayed their ignorance and vanity. If therefore they can be no more composed in our imperfect assemblies, what could they do in heaven? without a change would it not be a hell to such, where every object must fill them with shame and confusion! Thus we see, even in this life, that two cannot walk together except they be agreed; and that though we was not chosen for holiness, yet because we should be so, even *holy and without blame before him in love*^y.

Again, Saints may be described externally, and by considering that both their outside, and inward experience, agrees to those of old; that will strengthen our reasons for continuing the name. I having already touched upon the internal part, would now just observe, that by consulting the word, our outward appearance is much the same as was theirs three thousand years ago; I mean in the eyes of the world, weak and foolish. Thus *Noah*, being moved by fear, prepared an ark; in doing which he condemned the world, and became an heir of that

^w Ps. xlv. 13. ^x Heb. xii. 14. ^y Eph. i. 4.

righteousness that was by faith^z. And I am persuaded he did not more condemn them in practice, than they him in speeches, wondering at his simplicity in providing a safeguard for what they thought he had no room to fear. Thus we daily find, that those who tremble at God's word, believe its contents, and are enabled through grace to fly to Christ, as the Ark of God's strength, for safety and protection, are equally derided and blamed; and some of those scoffers are not convinced of their folly, 'till the flood of God's wrath sweeps them away. Saints ever have been, and will be, disesteemed by the men of this world, they only seeing their outside, make them the objects of contempt and scorn, and look upon them as the scum of the earth. But Saints are compared to Nuts^a, which though they have a mean outside, yet a delicious kernel. Yes, thanks be to God, they have a life the world knows nothing of; a life that is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory^b. Again, as though they were fools and ideots, the worldly have in every age shun'd their company, and, if no self-end was in view, cared not for their conversation. And is it not so now? does not the world love its own; and, as the vulgar proverb is, 'Birds of a feather flock together?' Well, let the Saints remember, if they were of the world, it would love them. Be not concerned at this, my friends, but rejoice, and remember a day is coming, one, when these deluded mortals shall better discern between the righteous and the wicked, and

z Heb. xi. 7.

a Cant. vi. 11.

b Col. iii. 4.

know the difference between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not^c.

Let us now, from this head, make the following uses :

First, Learn hence, however startling it may appear, that it shall be found at last all are Saints or Devils. Men may divide and subdivide as they please, and make use of distinctions hardly distinguishable, yet in the end it will be found as I say, either *Wheat* or *Tares*, *Sheep* or *Goats*, *Believers* or *Unbelievers*; there will be no *By-stander*, no *unconverted*^{corrupted} *Person*, no *Purgatory*; it will be *Heaven* or *Hell*, *Christ* and *Salvation*, or, if any thing short, *everlasting Destruction*.

But, Second, Is there such good reasons to be given for the continuance of the term? and does it appear from scripture, that there is such a taste of grace here and glory hereafter? Then may every soul before me, who uses this as a term of reproach, blush and be ashamed. What an instance of ignorance is it for any to say this and the other is Saintish! intending it as a mark of disgrace, when it is indeed an honourable epithet, and serves to remind such, if really so, of the honour conferred upon them.

Third, On the contrary, if there are any before me that please themselves with this name, who it may be at present have no right to it; let such remember that Saints are glorious within, though mean without; that though they work not for life, yet from it, and are ordained not to dishonour God, but to shew forth his glory. Men may call themselves, or the Pope, if he please, make Saints; yet I would tell them, the name

^c Mal. iii. 18.

without the blessing shall be of no more use than *Esau's*; and that all this shall not profit, if they be yet in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity.

Fourth, If upon enquiry we can arrive at any satisfaction, and without deceiving ourselves, safely conclude we are by Grace one of that number; then may it be our study and care to walk worthy our profession and calling; and may we be led to wonder and admire at the love of God toward us. O how much in this respect do the children of this world in their generation exceed the children of light! How careful are many to preserve their honour, and secure their possessions? And how particularly cautious in the choice of their company and friends! Let Saints then endeavour to remember, they are the children of a King; and be filled with an holy indignation against the paths of sin, and the society of the prophane: And may a sense of their relation to the Lord, prevent an immoderate desire after the things of time and sense, remembering that in Christ they have *durable riches and righteousness*^d. So may the frequent views of our unmerited mercies, lead us always to admiration and praise; let us often be saying, when contemplating this character, Why me, and not another?—Grace (if I know any thing of it) is of an humbling nature, and the more I am helped by faith to view a Redeemer's love, the lower I am in my own sight. When *David* sent to requite *Abigail's* favour, by making her his wife, the woman was lost in wonder at the King's condescension and goodness, and thinks that to be a servant of

^d Prov. viii. 18.

his servants would better become her^e. And ought we not to admire that our Maker should become our Husband, though *the Lord of Hosts is his name*^f, and, like *Abigail*, have a grateful sense of his love and condescension. When *David* would have *Mephibosheth* eat bread at his table, he says, *What ! such a dead dog as I am*^g ! And can we less admire that such unworthy worms, should have a feast of fat things provided^h, wine on the lees well refined, and to hear our Jesus say, *Eat, O Friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved*ⁱ. So *David* himself discovered humility like this, when the messengers of *Saul*, perhaps in a rough uncouth manner, told him of the King's design in the marriage of his daughter ; to whom he replied, *Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a King's son-in-law*, (sure you forget) *I am but a poor man, and lightly esteemed*^k ? Thus may we reprove the giddy and unthinking, who despise the favours that the children of God enjoy, and be saying, when occasion calls, What ! seemeth it a light thing in your sight to be related to Heaven's King, and eat with continuance of his spiritual favours ! What are we, and what is our father's house, that we are brought hitherto !

Lastly, from this head, to apply it to the case of our deceased friend ; such was she while a sojourner amongst us, I mean, an admirer of Free Grace ; and had tasted of it : This all who knew her, and that know the Lord, will readily own, and must be constrained to say, she lived as agreeable to every relation she bore in the Church,

e 1 Sam. xxv. 41. f Isa. liv. 5. g 2 Sam. ix. 8. h Isa. xxv. 6. i Song v. 1. k 1 Sam. xviii. 23.

and Family, as most in the present day. As to the world and the things of it, happy for her, she had very little concern with, her life being in a singular manner devoted to the privileges of real Religion, in which her soul has been oft refreshed and comforted. In her illness she was resigned, desiring, when she had intervals of sense, that patience might have its perfect work, nor the affliction removed, till it should have answered the gracious end for which it was sent; which, though to our loss, we now find was to her unspeakable gain, we having room to believe it ended in giving her entrance upon everlasting Glory.

Having proved that God has his Saints among the Children of Men, and given some reasons why they may be so called, I shall now, Secondly, attempt to shew they must die.

That they do die, and have done, is beyond dispute.

Abel, the first appearance of the gracious promise, and first of the woman's seed, is no sooner distinguished in offering up his sacrifice by faith¹, but he is distinguished by a sudden and awful death.

Noah, who found favour in the sight of God^m, and who was preserved from the waters of the flood, yet at length the waters of Death prevailed against him.

Abraham, stiled the friend of God, saved and preserved in many dangers, departs at last, and is gathered to his people.

Isaac, so obedient to his father, and so resigned to the will of God, is nevertheless worn out

¹ Heb. xi. 4. ^m Gen. vi 8.

with cares, his eyes become dim, and at God's command are closed in Death.

Jacob, that heir of trouble, who from his mother's womb was engaged in strife; though he is preserved in that awful famine, goes down to *Ægypt* in peace, and lives to see his beloved *Joseph* again; yet in *Goshen* he soon gives up the ghost, and expires in prophecy and praise.

Joseph, that fruitful boughⁿ, whose branches ran over the wall; whose bow abode strong in strength, and whose Arms were made strong by the Hands of the mighty God of *Jacob*; even this *Joseph* dies at last in *Ægypt*, and gives commandment concerning his bones^o.

Moses too, that faithful servant in the House of God, that meek and humble man, after bearing with the provocations of *Israel* for about forty years, is bid to go up to the Mount, and resign his life in the hands of his Redeemer; as *Aaron* had done before him.

Yea, *Joshua*, that valiant chief, who fought the battles of the Lord, and who so often returned in triumph, is at last conquered by death, and leaves his earthly spoils behind him.

David also, and the rest of the prophets, rest from their labours. *David*, so expert in War, so great a conqueror, falls by Death, and *Solomon* his Son reigns in his stead.

Nor has the Gospel-day made a difference.

Matthew and *Mark* are gone, *Luke* the beloved Physician, and *John* the beloved disciple, are both departed; *Peter* has made his exit, and *Paul's* imprisonments, stripes, and hardships, are no more. Thus we see, the most illustrious die,

ⁿ Gen. xlix. 22. ^o Heb. xi. 22.

and

and that we have room to say, *Our Fathers, where are they? And the Prophets, do they live for ever^p?*

But I was not only to shew they die, but also to enquire, why?

And, First, I apprehend the necessity of their Death appears on consideration of their having sinned; which Saints themselves are not exempt from while here, for in their flesh dwells no good thing^q. This therefore shews the reason why even the body must pass under a change, before it can enter into glory; which being a part of Christ's purchase, it must do.

Give me leave from hence to observe the holiness and justice of God, who makes even his redeemed subject to death, which displays his holy indignation against Sin. Ye careless and unthinking mortals, who conceive that the Lord is more merciful than just, meditate on these things; and above all consider the Death of Christ, who being only a sinner by imputation, must not be freed neither from a temporal Death, nor the wrath of God. Ponder this display of God's Justice; and may ye be helped to say, If he spared not his own Son, how much less can we, upon so weak a foundation, look for pardon, or expect forgiveness.

Secondly, Saints must die, when their work is done, and the ends of their creation answered. I have already endeavoured to shew you God does all things according to his will, in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth^r; and that he acts not with uncertainty in any thing, we may be sure then, as a

p Zech. i. 5. q Rom. vii. 18. r Dan. iv. 35.

sparrow falls not without leave, and that as the hairs of our head are numbered, and that as there is a set time for every purpose under the sun, so therefore the Death of Saints cannot be forgotten. Hence I would observe, that all die, but not before their several parts are done, for none can make his exit before. This should comfort churches in the removal of ministers, who seem to be taken away in the midst of usefulness and service; but it only seems so, for when any are removed, we may conclude their work of every kind is done, and therefore God, in mercy, has taken them away from the evil to come. May this support the mourners before me; let the weeping mother and disconsolate brother and sister meditate on this for comfort: Does not the labourer look for the hour of rest, and expect his dismissal at the appointed time? even so the Saints desire to wait all the days of their appointed time, till their change come^s.

Third, Saints must die, to make way for others. Nothing short of that God, in whom we trust, could manage this difficult task, and bring on and call off, from the stage of time, without strange confusion. And why the life of the wicked are so long continued, is sometimes accounted for by observing, that from them shall descend and appear, at such a time, some of God's chosen. And sometimes, because they live to be a scourge to the Saints for their own folly; and yet they, *i. e.* the wicked, at the same time filling up their measure of sin,

till it ripens to maturity, and they, in wrath, be taken away. And again, sometimes quite the contrary; I mean when, for some base end, they are concerned to nourish and protect those whom they hate; for God's children are often made to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock^t.

Fourth, Saints must die, that they may receive the exceeding great and precious promises made unto them. All that mortals do, or can enjoy here, fall vastly short of coming up to what God has prepared for them that love and fear him^u. Riches, honour, fame, yea, if all earthly blessings could unite together, they would be trifling to the joys above, to a seat at Christ's right-hand, where there are rivers of pleasure for ever-more^w. God gives his children a hope of this glory, and therefore they look for a fulfilment of the promise, and rejoice that there yet remains a rest for them^x. And he is faithful that has promised, there shall not one good thing fail^y. It is on this account they die, and depart to be with Christ, which is far better than to be here^z, who will have all his with him, where he is, to behold his glory^a. Mourn not then, my friends, for her, but rather for yourselves, since for ends like these she is in mercy taken away: O rather may it be our grand concern, to know our interest in a living Redeemer! that when he calls we may be ready, yea, willing to depart, saying, upon his appearing in such a manner, Lo, this

^t Deut. xxxii. 13. ^u 1 Cor. ii. 9. ^w Psal. xvi. 11. ^x Mic. ii. 10. ^y Josh. xxiii. 14. ^z Phil. i. 23. ^a John xvii 24.

God is our God; I have waited for him, now will I be glad, and rejoice in his salvation^b.

I now proceed, in the last place, to consider for what reasons it may be said, the Death of Saints are precious in the sight of the Lord.

First, It is precious, as it answers the designs and purposes of his love and grace toward them. Thus (if I might compare great things with small) we may observe it is with men, who when any has been engaged a considerable time, in bringing to light some curious machine for the public good, what delight and pleasure has it afforded, when all their scattered parts have been put together, and it has fully answered the end designed! I grant, indeed, that in many things there is a disparity; but yet so it is, speaking after the manner of men, with the Lord, at the Death of his Saints, who beholds all his designs exactly to have answered their great intention. And, oh! what a field for contemplation does this open to the believer, to consider what goes before it! God, in the enjoyment of his persons, once dwelt alone, yet, from his existence, which had no beginning, he determined to make his glory known to thousands. Angels are created, some confirmed, some left upon a mutable bottom, or to the freedom of their wills: They all fall (that were upon that bottom), are ejected, and drove out from the gracious presence of God, and are reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day^c. Again, God creates these lower heavens and lower earth, and makes man, which was not a new thought, but according to his former purpose and design: They are

*heiriant
Gwain*

angofastalus

^b Isa. xxv. 9. ^c Jude ver. 6.

made for the ends of his glory; and *Adam* was an head and representative of all that should follow, who being, like the fallen Angels, left to the liberty of his will, he falls, and his posterity in him. The Lord now discovers his design with the woman's seed, tells him it shall bruise the serpent's head, and makes it appear all such are safe in that everlasting covenant, *ordered in all things, and sure*^d. The promised Saviour, in which the Patriarchs trusted, came according to the prophecy, once in the end of the *Jewish* world, and offered up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of his people. At his departure he promises, that the Comforter shall take of the things of Jesus, and shew them to us^e; and that he will be with his Ministers, *even unto the end of the world*^f. They, thus encouraged, draw the bow at a venture^g; he guides the arrow to the heart, opens the womb of conversion, and compels his children to come in: They, through grace, believe, rejoice in his love, fulfil his good pleasure here, and then are removed, by Death, to enter upon the mansions of glory he has prepared for them: Thus *precious in the sight of the Lord is the Death of his Saints*. If I studied enlargement, I might here consider that all God's works are common to the three Persons, and shew how it is precious in the sight of them all: That the Father delights in beholding what his infinite wisdom has devised;—that the Son delights in seeing the end of his labour, the travail of his soul, and is satisfied;—and the Holy Spirit in viewing them, which he not only quickened, and called out of

d 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. e John xiv. 26. and xv. 26. f Matt. xxviii. 20. g 1 Kings xxii. 34.

darkness into marvellous light, but which he also sealed to the day of redemption^h. But fearing I may be thought too long, I would,

Secondly, observe, the death of Saints must be precious to the Lord, because they then not only cease to sin, murmur, complain, or have hard thoughts of God; but on the contrary, have a clear and comprehensive view of his love and favour towards them. Sin, while here, is the believer's burden, under which he groans, and sighs for deliverance; nor can our modern Perfectionists, either by their weak arguments, or weaker conduct, satisfy the discerning, that it is, or ever will be otherways in this vale of tears. I grant indeed, they have a part that cannot sin, and therefore commences that warfare and contest between flesh and spirit; for *what can be seen in the Shunamite, but as it were the company of two armies*^k. Alas! such is our ignorance and sinfulness, that we are very apt to murmur and complain, and like the *Jews* of old, mutter perverseness^l; or like *Jonah*, ready to say, *I do well to be angry, even to death*^m. Well, our friend has done with this; the war in the members is over.—Those low desponding thoughts to which we are addicted, are gone;—that jealousy and suspicion, which was wont to grieve, can return no more;—sin of every kind is fled;—the whole host of her spiritual enemies are put to flight, not daring to pursue, and she is more than conqueror through the Lord Jesus. Nor does she only enjoy freedom from every foe, but has now a pleasure in beholding those Providences, that were once mysterious and perplexing, and is made to re-

^h Eph. iv. 30. ^k Song vi. 13. ^l Isa. lx. 3 ^m Jonah iv. 9.

joice in many things, whose denial was once the occasion of grief and trouble. Now that text shines with an unknown lustre, where it says, *All things work together for good, to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose*ⁿ. Now dark things are made light, and crooked things made straight, and she perfectly reconciled to the will of her Lord. Thus it appears God delights in being understood, and in convincing his people of that love he ever did, and ever will bear unto them. Who can help saying, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out*^o!

If God has such delight in his Saints, as I have been shewing, ought not the wicked and prophane to be careful of their conduct and behaviour towards them, remembering that he reproveth Kings for their sake, and that whoso toucheth them, toucheth as it were the apple of God's eye. Besides, methinks the wicked have but small reason, in one sense, to act such a part; for all the common mercies they enjoy, is by reason of God's having a people upon the earth; for they are, as *Hannah* says, the Pillars of the earth, and the Lord has set the world upon them. For them Summer and Winter endures, and the revolving seasons run their appointed round. For them all temporal mercies are continued, and when they are no more, those mercies shall cease. These Props being removed, that confusion so oft prophesied of, shall immediately follow; God being determined then to pour out the vials of his wrath, and to consume the earth with the inhabitants thereof.

ⁿ Rom. viii. 28. ^o Rom. xi. 33.

But to return ; I having a little shewn the agreeable alteration that takes place, at the death of Saints, I might here enlarge upon their business, and blessedness above; but knowing I cannot now enter upon an enquiry of that kind, without considerably contracting my own short ideas of the matter, I shall therefore content myself with only just observing, with regard to our young Friend, what a change a few days has made, and so conclude.

Last Lord's-day, and on the Monday morning^p, she was labouring hard for life, and struggling under the cold hand of Death.—Her minutes were spent with heavy groans, and every moment gave various signals of her great distress.—We saw, and pity'd, but could not help —An awful paleness increased, her pulse ceased to beat, her sighs lessened, she forgot to groan, and in an instant was, What? O! amazing! a separate spirit, freed from her clay, escorted by Angels, and with wonder and praise brought before the throne.

She has indeed by this change, lost her earthly friends, and left a tender and compassionate mother behind : Yet, sweet exchange ! she is gone to that friend that sticketh closer than that of a brother, even to Jesus, who more than answers every relation she has lost, and who is a *Kinsman, Friend, Brother, Father, and Husband* to his people. She has lost the means of grace, and the company of the godly here, in whom was her delight; yet as well might a man regret, that has lost some uncertain stream, and found a Fountain; for she sees not through a lattice now, or a glass

^p She died on the Monday about 11 o'clock.

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joice in many things, whose denial was once the occasion of grief and trouble. Now that text shines with an unknown lustre, where it says, *All things work together for good, to them that love God, who are the called according to his purposeⁿ*. Now dark things are made light, and crooked things made straight, and she perfectly reconciled to the will of her Lord. Thus it appears God delights in being understood, and in convincing his people of that love he ever did, and ever will bear unto them. Who can help saying, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out^o!*

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darkly,

darkly, but face to face^q, and beholds the Man Christ, the God Man, in a manner it was not possible she could below^r. Nor when it is considered, can she feel the loss of such companions as we, since she has now joined the general assembly of the first-born in Heaven, enjoys a holy freedom with Angels, is among the spirits of just men made perfect, and above all, brought near to Jesus her Mediator and Redeemer^s.

Here at the best we are subject to error, and interruption; in the midst of our most spiritual performances, some distressing or simple thought oft breaks in, and mars our joy; or some cloud intervenes, and lays us low: But with her how happily different! no shadow of a change, but rather a certainty, not only of the continuance of *Knowledge, Holiness, and Joy*, but an increase of it, throughout all the ages of eternity.

May such considerations not only banish our immoderate grief, but be a means of enlarging our desires after an enjoyment of these things. O that by faith we may oft be indulged with striking views of the good land before us, and find, when God's time is come, a readiness to enter, remembering, that Precious in his sight, is the Death of his Saints.

q 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

r John xix. 5.—These words were preached from about 3 weeks before her Death: She was not only very comfortable in hearing, but “Behold the Man!” was almost always uppermost, till she beheld him in Glory.

s Heb. xii. 23, 24.

END of the S E R M O N.

The HYMN sung at the Close of the Sermon.

I.

'TIS finish'd now, the spirit's gone,
 To glory gone, no fear;
 Temptations, trials, all are done,
 No troubles enter there.

II.

Nor fear of Death, nor fear of Hell,
 Can e'er disturb her more;
 'Tis ours to fear what Satan tell,
 Her doubts and fears are o'er.

III.

What crowns her bliss, 'tis ever so,
 A change can never come;
 "No, the bright world, to which we go,
 "Is our eternal home."

IV.

O happy Death! O sweet release!
 From sin, and Satan free!
 Lord! when shall I, from sinning cease,
 O when so happy be?

darkly, but face to face^q, and beholds the Man Christ, the God Man, in a manner it was not possible she could below^r. Nor when it is considered, can she feel the loss of such companions as we, since she has now joined the general assembly of the first-born in Heaven, enjoys a holy freedom with Angels, is among the spirits of just men made perfect, and above all, brought near to Jesus her Mediator and Redeemer^s.

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END of the SERMON.

The HYMN sung at the Close of the Sermon.

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"Is our eternal home."

IV.

O happy Death! O sweet release!
From sin, and Satan free!
Lord! when shall I, from sinning cease,
O when so happy be?

The following HYMN was sung while the Corps rested in the Meeting-House, just before its Interment.

I.

AS without hope, why do we grieve?
Why mourn we for the Dead?
With open arms did Christ receive
The joyful spirit fled.

II.

Cou'd we have seen the glorious Saint,
With sister spirits fly,
It wou'd have hush'd our sad complaint,
And made us wish to die.

III.

Cou'd we have seen her join the choir
Of thrones, dominions, pow'rs,
To joys as great, we shou'd aspire,
And wish her glory ours.

IV.

Cou'd we have heard, when Jesus spoke,
And said, Ye blessed, come!
Our setters then must sure have broke,
Our souls have hasted home!

V.

But we must wait, Lord, may we wait
As heirs of glory shou'd!
May now those joys, sweet mirth create,
May they be understood.

VI.

Help us to see what thou wilt give,
What Saints departed have,
That here we to thy glory live,
Nor tremble at the grave!

The following Four Lines are intended for an EPITAPH.

CHRISTIANS must die, or here had not been laid,
The body of this sober, pious Maid:
She was,---yet I'll forbear her worth to paint,
And only say, she was, and is, a SAINT!

F I N I S.